

One-on-one with new Wilson teachers

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With the start of the 2013-14 school year, Wilson High School didn't just get a new roof, but also some new teachers — Morgan McFadden and Matt Carlson.

Carlson

While teaching ceramics at Grant High School last year, Matt Carlson met longtime Wilson High School art teacher Susan Parker. When Parker announced plans to retire, Carlson was eager to apply for the job — and then delighted to learn he had been hired for it.

That, he said, “is phenomenal, because this really is a dream job.”

Carlson, 33, received his bachelor's of fine arts in printmaking from California State University, Long Beach, and his master's degree from Pacific University in Forest Grove.

“I think that that school really set me up to do very well in education,” he said. “They're a very progressive school, and they really helped ... to teach to a variety of different learners and also bring emerging technology into the classroom to develop lesson plans that were meaningful for students, to really do a lot of assessment to make sure that the students are learning the fundamentals of whatever you're trying to teach.”

At Wilson, Carlson will be teaching beginning photography, Advanced Placement art and Advanced Placement photography. No matter the class, his students will have their work cut out

for them this year — in a good way.

“For beginning photography, I want my students to learn the

fundamentals of how to capture light — how to create a very strong image — and, really, I want my students to fall in love with photography, and the magic of the image of appearing on the paper was something that I still remember, and I think it's a valuable experience for students to have that mix of science and art — which photography really is.

“My AP art classes, I really want them to, by the time they leave my class, have a really strong understanding of the art elements and principles, and be able to use those in their own artwork. I want them to feel they're developing a strong personal voice, able to express themselves through their artwork, and I want them to be able to talk about their work and the work of other artists in a way that shows that they have a deep understanding of the fundamentals of art.

In his AP photography class, meanwhile, “I really want my ... kids to have really honed their skills in the darkroom and in the digital room,” he said. “Here at Wilson we have not only a darkroom and a vast array of different types of cameras, but we also have quite a few computers with the newest Adobe Suite package, so I really want them to be able to kind of understand and express themselves and use all the amazing things that are here — the facilities.”

Carlson lives in Southeast Portland, but said he is happy to be teaching in Southwest.

“Really, the community is the most important thing I feel here. I already feel invested in the community because my fiancée works at Paloma Clothing, so I've fallen in to a really good place.”

Barely two weeks into the 2013-14 school year, he is already sure Wilson is where he's meant to be.

“I feel extremely blessed to be part of the Wilson community,” he said, “And I look forward to working with my students ... I expect really amazing things to come out of this art department.”

Much like his predecessor.

“I owe everything to Susan Parker. She was instrumental in me being hired here — she sat on the committee during the interview process — and she really has made a nice place for me to land,” he said. “As far as the Wilson community is concerned, everybody has really welcomed me with open arms. I've had multiple times that I have really big shoes to fill, and that is very, very true, and I am definitely up to the challenge. I'm very passionate about the creative process and working with young people, and I hope that I can honor her legacy by doing the best job that I can do.

“I'm not here to replace Susan Parker — I'm here to pass on my love for the creative process to my students, and to show off the work that they've done.”



by: CONNECTION PHOTO: DREW DAKESSIAN - Matt Carlson

McFadden

Previously a temporary teacher at King School in Northeast Portland, this is not McFadden's first time at Wilson — she served as a substitute in English as a second language classes and freshman and sophomore English while Ellen Whatmore was on maternity leave.

"I just remember (it being) such a good experience, and being super sad to leave, because everyone — the kids were great; the staff was so incredibly kind," McFadden said. "So I made sure I contacted Maude (Lamont) and let her know I would do anything to come back."

McFadden got her wish; she was hired as a ninth-grade language arts teacher and as support staff in Wilson's growing theater department.

The 29-year-old teacher is thrilled about her new posts.

"I love freshman English; it's probably one of my favorites," McFadden said. "High school is great, but when they're freshman it's kind of fun to see them try to figure out high school."

And to her, the syllabus is scintillating.

"Some of the texts are my favorites," she said. "We do 'The Odyssey', and I'm really into Greek mythology. ... I think the kids can have a lot of fun with that, especially since a lot of them have read 'Percy Jackson' they can tie it into that. I'm a drama person, so getting to teach 'Romeo and Juliet', I'm always a sucker for that."

A self-proclaimed TV and film buff, McFadden said she is also looking forward to teaching style and design to theater students. "It's such a great department as-is," she said. "I'm super impressed by the theater department here."

Because she lives in Northeast, McFadden said, "It's also going to be fun, permanently, to get to know the area and our neighborhoods and families."

While she gets an education in all things Southwest Portland, McFadden shared what her ninth-grade students can look forward to learning this year.

"Expect mastering school, being prepared for the next three years of the skills you're going to need to get you to be the most successful — everything from 'How do I work a planner and keep on track?' to 'How do I write an essay?'," she said. "And hopefully they can have some fun in there. That's the hope; it won't be the same thing every day."

McFadden received her bachelor's degree from the University of Oregon, studying literature while majoring in psychology and minoring in theater arts. She then got her Master of Arts in teaching from the University of Southern California, with a secondary focus in language arts and English as a second language.

With that academic background, all roads would seem to have led to where she is now. And when asked if there is anything she'd like readers of *The Connection* to know, she did not hesitate:

"How privileged I am to be here, and ... how gifted and amazing these kids are," she said. "I'm excited to work with them and get to know them and find a place where I can be part of this great family."



by: CONNECTION PHOTO: DREW DAKESSIAN - Morgan McFadden